

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NIAMEY 03862 300908Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1268

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 3862

E.O. 11652: AGDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, NG

SUBJ: AMBASSADORS MEETING WITH KOUNTCHE: SITUATION IN AFRICA

1. SUMMARY: DURING AUGUST 25 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR JAMES, PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA. HE DISCUSSED AT LENGTH, SITUATION IN CHAD, WESTERN SAHARA, AND GHANA. KOUNTCHE ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE OF NIGERIA AND DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES IN LIBYA. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE OPENED MEETING BY NOTING THAT AFRICA FACED MANY PROBLEMS, SOME OF WHICH WOULD PRESENT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE USSR. SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY MIGHT COME IN KENYA IF SERIOUS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 NIAMEY 03862 300908Z

INTERNAL DISTURBANCES FOLLOW THE DEATH OF JOMO KENYATTA. ANOTHER PROBLEM AREA WAS ANGOLA. HE HOPED THAT THE RE-PPROCHMENT BETWEEN MOBUTU AND NETO WOULD LAST, AS IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR AFRCRA. IF IT DID NOT, THE SITUATION MIGHT BECOME EVEN WORSE THAN BEFORE. THESE TWO STATES (ZAIRE AND ANGOLA) NEEDED EACH OTHER IN ORDER TO DEVELOP. ONE COULD NOT MAKE PROGRESS WITHOUT THE OTHER.

3. CHAD: KOUNTCHE SEEMED PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE LONG-TERM OUTLOOK FOR RECONCILIATION IN CHAD. HE SAID HABRE IS A GENUINE NATIONALIST WITH STRONG TIES TO THE SUDAN AND TO TRADITIONAL LEADERS THERE, AND HE HAS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG THE TOUBOU. HOWEVER, KOJNTCHE SAID FROLINAT WAS BADLY DIVIDED BETWEEN TOUBOU AND ARAB FACTIONS, WITH A THIRD GROUP INCLINED TOWARDS FRANCE. QADDAFI OF LIBYA, SEEING AN OPPORTUNITY, HAD STIRRED UP TROUBLE AMONG THESE FACTIONS, AND THIS HAD LED TO SOME SHARP FIGHTING. KOUNTCHE SAID HE WAS CONVINCED LIBYA WAS NOT INTERESTED IN A RECONCILIATION IN CHAD. INDEED ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS WOULD BE MOST HELPED BY CONTINUED TURMOIL. HE HAD TOLD MALLOUM THAT AS EARLY AS 1976. AT THAT TIME, HE HAD ALSO ADVISED MALLOUM TO OFFER HABRE A SENIOR POST IN THE CHADIAN GOVERNMENT. IF MALLOUM HAD DONE THAT, RECONCILIATION WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. IT NOW SEEMED RATHER LATE IN THE DAY FOR SUCH ACTION, ALTHOUGH HE HOPED FOR THE BEST.

4. WESTERN SAHARA: KOUNTCHE SAID MAURITANIA WOULD LIKE TO EXTRACT ITSELF FROM THE WESTERN SAHARA BUT FELT IT COULD NOT FOR FEAR OF MOROCCO. MAURITANIA LACKED THE MEANS TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE. TAKING NOTE OF THE FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION, KOUNTCHE URGED U.S. TO INTERVENE ALSO, BUT ONLY IN MEDIATOR ROLE (SEE SEPTEL ON U.S. NIGER BILATERAL RELATIONS).

5. LIBYA: THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION KOUNTCHE DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NIAMEY 03862 300908Z

CONCERN ABOUT LIBYA ACTIVITY IN CHAD (SEE ABOVE) AND ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA. HE WORRIED ABOUT LIBYAN ACTION TO ATTRACT CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TEMPORARILY IN LIBYA TO BECOME LIBYAN CITIZENS. HE SAID HE HAD HEARD REPORTS ABOUT NEW MAPS BEING DRAWN IN LIBYA SHOWING LARGE PARTS OF CHAD AND NIGER AS LIBYAN TERRITORY. MOREOVER, HE HAD RECENTLY HEARD THAT QADDAFI HAD SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH EAST GERMANY TO BUILD AN ARMS FACTORY IN LIBYA.

6. NIGERIA-KOUNTCHE EXPRESSED CONCERN RE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF NIGERIA. HE FEARED THAT CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD FLOUNDER WHEN OLD QUARRELS AND DIVISIONS (NORTH VS SOUTH; ETHNIC AND TRIBAL IDENTIFICATION) APPEARED AGAIN. HE REVIEWED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING NIGERIA, INCLUDING WEAKNESS OF THE NAIRA WHICH BECAUSE OF INFLATION WAS ONLY WORTH ABOUT 60 TO 70 CFA. HE HAD TOLD GARBA AND OBASANJO THAT THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE; HE FEARED THAT THE CIVILIANS WOULD BE UNABLE TO KEEP THE SOUTH CONTENT AS THE MILITARY HAD.

7. GHANA: KOUNTCHE SAID GHANA WAS A COUNTRY IN SERIOUS TROUBLE, SUFFERING FROM INFLATION AND RESULTANT SMUGGLING. THE CEDI WAS NOW WORTH ONLY 25 CFA FRANCS, AND THE GHANAIS HAD

NO CONTROL OVER TRANSFER OF FUNDS OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY.
GHANA WAS POORLY LOCATED TO HAVE ITS OWN CURRENCY AS IT WAS
SURROUNDED BY HARD CURRENCY (CFA) STATES.

8. COMMENT: KOUNTCHES PREOCCUPATION WITH LIBYA'S INTERNATIONAL
AMBITION AND NIGERIA'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS ARE ONLY NATURAL FOR
THE LEADER OF A SMALL COUNTRY SANDWICHED BETWEEN TWO LARGE, MORE
POWERFUL NEIGHBORS. HIS WORRIES GROW EVEN MORE ACUTE WHEN
ONE OF THEM IS BARELY ABLE TO VEIL ITS HOSTILE INTENTIONS.
THIS CONCERN NO DOUBT UNDERLIES HIS SUGGESTION THE THE U.S.
BECOME AN ACTIVE MEDIATOR IN OTHER AFRICAN DISPUTES, SUCH AS
THE WESTERN SAHARA. WE WILL NO DOUBT HEAR MORE SUCH FROM NIGER,
AT LEAST AS LONG AS WE ARE SEEN AS A POTENTIAL BALANCE WHEEL HERE.

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PAGE 04 NIAMEY 03862 300908Z

9. THIS CABLE WAS NOT CLEARED BY AMBASSADOR JAMES BEFORE HIS
DEPARTURE. HE MAY HAVE DIFFERENT OR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON
HIS ARRIVAL IN THE DEPARTMENT AUGUST 30. KEOGH

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